

NYTimes

Letters to the E

The Pardon: A 'Nation Bereft of Mercy?' SEP 19 1974

To the Editor:

The public outcry following Mr. Ford's pardon has been even more appalling than the act itself. While I agree that his move was preemptive and potentially dangerous to our system of justice, the indignation must be examined in its myopia.

One of the most loathsome features of the Nixon Administration was its vindictiveness toward its adversaries. In the May issue of Harper's, Arthur M. Schlesinger wrote of the apparent disregard of the Nixon Administration for the American political notion of "limited liability in which the opposition must always be permitted to live to fight another day."

Was it the greatest legacy then of the Nixon Administration that he left the nation bereft of mercy? Had he been impeached, criminal charges may or may not have followed. Mr. Nixon has been forced from a position of great trust and power. Are we so callous and disillusioned that we can no longer be satisfied without the sight of blood and brutality? Must we always now assume that some sort of collusion exists unless broken bodies are paraded before us?

I would hope that Mr. Ford's act of courage might be a public example of his repudiation of the vicious self-righteousness and apparent amorality of his predecessor. When an institution such as the Presidency has suffered from such severe debilitation, it nearly defies imagination to propose remedies. When we are presented with the image of a warm and human act, we condemn it. Perhaps we might consider our own standards of mercy, as we might desire or dispense it, and put the logic of the computers in abeyance. We might at least examine our near-hysteria.

I would also propose that we re-examine the notion that we have aided and abetted Mr. Nixon's misdeeds. What secret contempt was behind the epithet "silent majority"? As the various conspirators are eventually pardoned or trials are aborted, we might learn to be more cautious and less willing to accept glib phrases and become more acutely aware of the historical facts.

How could we be surprised at Mr.

Nixon's misdeeds? Their repetition was as sure an evil omen as our lack of compassion is now. I would hope that we would be a bit less sanctimonious and probe our own reactions and outcries.

JEFFREY KULICK
Chicago, Sept. 11, 1974

To Hear the Nixon Case

To the Editor:

The American people must now contemplate, in anguish, bitterness and shame, the incalculably tragic consequences for the rule of law and equal justice in our society conjured up by the President's pardon of Richard Nixon.

Since the will of the Congress to impeach and try Mr. Nixon was frustrated by his resignation; since the role of the court system has been aborted by the pardon, and since that outrageously arbitrary act has left the resolution of the case in virtual limbo and has thus plunged large segments of the American people into despair and cynicism, something must be attempted to retrieve the situation.

I propose the creation of a Citizens Tribunal to hear the full case against Richard Nixon. This would be a responsible and high-minded panel of distinguished Americans, perhaps a score of eminent men and women from various walks of life who would sit together for as long as necessary to sift and evaluate the enormous amount of factual material.

This would be a symbolic intellectual and political proceeding, not a legal one, but it would have high moral standing. It would have the practical educational value of focusing in one place and in an organized fashion the vast and confusing welter of information. It would have the psychological value of somehow providing an emotional catharsis for the American people, whose natural need for a decently fitting climax to this tragedy has been frustrated. It would, finally, possess the historical virtue of enabling representative Americans to render judgment on the evidence.

MOSHE DECTER
New York, Sept. 10, 1974